

CETAG Response to potential uses of the former RAF Coltishall Site

CETAG continues to work with partners towards finding an appropriate use for the remainder of the former RAF Coltishall site. This has included meeting with several potential bidders for the site currently being marketed by the Ministry of Justice.

CETAG remains committed to seeing the whole of the site being used in a way that respects local environmental and community constraints but also that maximises the potential benefits to both the local and wider community. This includes economic benefits particularly the generation of jobs for local people. Creating a viable and long term sustainable community at Baders Field on the former Married Quarters site is also a priority.

CETAG has met with three of the potential bidders and while full comments and confirmation of any support must wait for the detailed schemes and the necessary planning process, the following initial comments are made:-

TAG Aviation:

TAG Aviation is exploring the possibility of using the whole of the site for the decommissioning of commercial passenger aircraft, component refurbishment and aviation servicing.

Initial consideration of the proposals suggests:

- The site would remain largely unchanged, making good use of existing facilities and site layout without the problems of breaking the site up for multiple uses / users
- A relatively low traffic impact with minimal HGV movement and lower levels of traffic than experienced when the site operated as an RAF base.
- The existing road and transport infrastructure could cope with the proposals with only small improvements required.
- There would be minimal air traffic movement with no intention of becoming an operational airfield/airport. Air traffic would be solely maintenance / recycling related.
- There would be significant employment opportunities over a five year period with over 300 jobs created, many of them locally sourced and with significant training and apprenticeship opportunities.
- There is an a clear identifiable business benefit for the proposer in seeking to make the scheme a success. Use of the whole site is crucial to the business plan with no reliance on other unrelated business use to create a viable scheme.
- There are important amenity benefits including protection and enhancement of the RAF heritage through community access to parts of the site and through the offer of museum facilities.

CETAG has agreed that the proposal by the TAG Aviation consortium is promising. There is an agreement to support the scheme in principle but there are strong concerns that the original proposals could expand to include leisure flying and /or a commercial helicopter operational base / service centre. There would be considerable community concern if these operational activities were to take place and they will not be supported by CETAG if they were to form part of the proposal.

WCD Aviation Group (Company being formed)

WCD is being established to bring together three core businesses

- Short sector air-taxi services throughout Europe
- Medium sector business jet charter with aircraft based in the Middle East
- Helicopter based rescue operations in South Africa

The company will establish its corporate head office at the Coltishall site with a range of non-flight support businesses:-

- WCD central management and administration office
- 24/7 flight planning and operations, servicing WCD and other operators
- Simulator based pilot training
- Crew safety training, serving all types of airlines
- Aircraft and engine maintenance centre:

Two further partner organisations will be located at the site

- A UK base for the African Continent Kingdoms Federation and organisation working on a range of poverty reduction and eradication programmes throughout Africa
- A UK base for Pharmacie Du Monde a charitable organisation working mainly in Africa focussing on vaccination programmes and supporting infra structure programmes

Initial consideration of the proposals suggests:-

- Provision of the flight planning and operations centre is an administrative office based function only.
- Provision of a maintenance centre for the companies UK based short range light jet fleet would form a main element of the proposals.
- The UK headquarters for the African Continent Kingdoms Federation and a planning and equipment storage centre for Pharmacie Du Monde providing an emergency disaster response facility would be key partner facilities operating on the site.
- The WCD Air Academy training centre for all cabin service based training would provide class room based training and does not involve flying time from the site.
- Conversion of some existing RAF buildings into a hotel and conference centre for use by the Academy training attendees would be included in the scheme.

- There would be potentially significant job creation with some locally sourced employees as well as relocated staff.
- There will be important public amenities through a public access heritage centre and museum to promote and maintain the heritage of RAF Coltishall
- Hosting other suitable businesses and activities in under utilized premises is proposed for the site but is not an essential element of the proposals. A property company will be established to manage this use.

The use of the whole site for aviation related use is welcomed with the proviso that the main air traffic movement would be limited to flights in and out for maintenance purposes and that full operational use of the air field for either commercial or leisure flying use would not be included. Full jet engine testing on the site cannot be supported.

Road traffic creation would be at levels below the previous use as an RAF base with only the very occasional increase when international disasters occurred and Pharmacie Du Monde traffic may increase with the delivery of supplies and humanitarian aid.

Locating other suitable businesses in any development would need to reflect the constraints of the site and the overall desire to achieve an integrated use of the whole site rather than piece meal development simply to fill vacant premises.

CETAG has agreed that the proposal by WCD meets significant objectives for the site and that there is an agreement to support the scheme in principle subject to full details being provided on air traffic movements, specific servicing activities and any other related business use being proposed.

Aylsham Growers - Anaerobic digester - Renewable power generation

Climate change and a need to reduce carbon emissions have pushed renewable energy into the spotlight and stimulated demand. The European Union has told member states to ensure 20 per cent of all energy use, and 10 per cent of all fuels are from renewable sources by 2020. The UK Government has reacted by creating a range of incentives to encourage businesses to meet those targets.

This proposal seeks to locate an anaerobic digester and power generation scheme on a small part of the site.

Initial consideration of the proposals suggests:-

- It is a small scale development occupying only 3 h.a. to provide both heat and electricity for the entire Coltishall site by means of anaerobic digestion, which is a renewable and eco friendly means of power generation.

- Feed stock for the system will be supplied by a consortium of local farmers that will be growing crops specifically for the digester predominantly comprising of maize, triticale and grain
- The Development would rely on some funding towards capital costs combined with the Feed Intake Tariff subsidies which have been guaranteed by Government for the next 25 years for feeding power into the national grid. This supports key Government policies and initiatives for sustainable renewable energy generation.
- The proposed plant would use the very latest proven technology for conversion of methane into both electricity and heat with the potential to then supply electricity and heat across the site for both businesses and neighbouring homes
- Feedstock for the digester would be mainly harvested and delivered to the site over a short 6 week period and stored in clamps on site for year round use. Traffic movements would be largely limited to the harvest period and be from a very local catchment area via agreed routes
- Use of farm waste products would not be part of the process. All by-product waste (digestate) would then be returned back to farmland where it is a valuable compost and nutrient fertiliser for subsequent crops
- The proposed anaerobic digester would produce very low noise levels (35db) and there would be no smell either from the production process or from the digestate which is produced as an end product of the process
- The process is largely automated and there would be no significant job generation (1 highly skilled person) associated with the scheme, however there would also be several local people employed on the surrounding farms involved with the growing and supplying of the feedstock
- This scheme has very significant green credentials through both renewable and sustainable power generation and contributes to the UK's objective of reducing our CO2 emissions by 20% over the next 10 years.
- All revenue from the proposed plant will stay within the local community and area rather than supporting national organisations.

This locally promoted scheme would ideally be linked to another overall use of the site and would provide a significant contribution to sustainable policies for overall use of the overall site. CETAG therefore recommends that the scheme proposer partners with another bidder.

CETAG support for this sustainably beneficial scheme is subject to confirmation and assurances on acceptable levels of the noise and smell associated with the anaerobic digester process and that road traffic movements for feedstock deliveries and collection of by product fertiliser from the site are at acceptable levels and via agreed routes.

General Issues

CETAG has agreed to work with all project proposers, should they approach us, the Coltishall Task Force and the local authorities to help achieve full and proper consideration of all potential schemes to ensure the maximum benefit for local communities and the wider Norfolk area. The recent decision by NNDC to seek Conservation Area Status for the site is welcomed and will, we believe, lead to more appropriate future uses of the site.

We are now seeking to ensure local community views are considered as part of the sale/disposal process being carried out by the Ministry of Justice and will also ensure local views are considered as part of the planning process carried out by NNDC for any future use being proposed.

Note to Editors:

CETAG is a consortium of local parish councils surrounding the former RAF Coltishall site. Originally established to consider the eco town proposals for the site, we are now focussing on options for the future use of the remainder of the site following purchase by the Ministry of Justice and provision of HMP Bure.

Further details at:

WWW.cetag.co.nr/

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